**Ph.D. Synopsis on**

# "Assessing the Information Needs and Seeking Behavior of Women Faculty Members Working in PU Colleges of Kalaburagi District of Karnataka: A study"

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Information is a human product. It is a knowledge-developing resource. Information is considered an essential resource that contributes to the development of a nation. It provides the core for the development of knowledge, the basis for innovations, and the resources for an informed citizenry. As a result, it becomes an essential commodity for the progress of society. Acknowledging the significance of information in national development, Wasserman (1991, p. 38) noted that "it is not an accident that the developed nations are those in which information products and services have been brought into being and are widely exploited, first in conventional forms and later through computer-intervention".

Members of a society acquire the needed information from a variety of sources. However, several of these sources are expensive, complex, or difficult for individuals to obtain and use. Therefore, the role of libraries becomes vital in meeting the information needs of individuals in society. Libraries develop their collections, facilities, and services to meet the information needs of their patrons.

However, in order to accomplish this task effectively, libraries must have a thorough understanding of the information needs and information-seeking behavior of their users. Information-seeking behavior is a broad term, which involves a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information, and finally use this information to satisfy his/her information needs. Various factors may determine the information-seeking behavior of an individual or a group of individuals. It is, therefore, desirable to understand the purpose for which information is required, the environment in which the user operates user's skills in identifying the needed information, channels and sources preferred for acquiring information, and barriers to information.

Adequate knowledge of the information needs of users is imperative for libraries in re-orienting their collections, services, and activities to synchronize them with the information-seeking behaviour of their patrons. Bandara (1993, p. 19) noted that 'if the library is to provide any meaningful information service, the user's information seeking habits should be taken into consideration.

Since the 1940s, numerous studies have been conducted investigating different aspects of this topic. Earlier studies primarily focused on scientists and technologists to assist in building information resources and systems to meet their information needs effectively. Earlier studies focused on scientists and engineers because of more interest in these libraries at that time and greater availability of funds. Later on, the scope of information-seeking studies expanded to include scholars and academics from other disciplines. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the information-seeking behavior of library users based on their subject interest, occupation, information environment, and geographical location. Information needs and seeking behavior of academics have also been popular areas of research. Many earlier studies reported that scholars and academicians heavily used books and journals.

Sethi (1990) used a questionnaire to study the information-seeking behavior of 256 social science faculty members in Indian universities. It was found that respondents preferred journals, books, government documents, and reference sources for meeting their information needs. The study also revealed lesser use of indexing and abstracting sources, book reviews, conference proceedings, dissertations and theses, newspaper clippings, and other non-book sources. However, Prasad (1998) noted that in addition to journal articles, non-traditional literature such as unpublished conference and symposia papers, research proposals, policy guidelines, and project reports were equally popular among the scholars.

Many studies have shown that in addition to formal information sources, academics also have relied heavily on informal communication channels to meet their information needs. Academic staff considered seminars and conferences as the third most important source of information after books and journals. It has been reported that scholar's value professional meetings for the purpose of gathering current information. Faculty members also considered interpersonal contacts, particularly off-campus contacts, as an important source for getting the needed information. Colleagues were preferred over other channels, as they were considered familiar, reliable, immediately accessible, inexpensive, and often provided a concise answer synthesizing the available information. In order to develop these informal contacts, libraries should facilitate informal meetings among scholars and compile up-to-date directories of local and international scholars in specialized disciplines. Many scholars in developing countries prefer informal channels for acquiring the needed information because of inadequate and irrelevant library collections, lack of information infrastructures, ineffective library services, lack of money to use fee-based information services, and inadequately trained and less cooperative library staff. The success of a library in meeting the information needs of its user plays an important role in the number of their future library visits. The information technology revolution is expected to bring significant changes in the information-seeking behavior of users.

Modem technology has resulted in new services, targeted at the specialized and unique information needs of users. The availability of electronic communication facilities such as e-mail, discussion groups, bulletin boards, electronic conferencing, and chit-chat groups, has opened new channels for communication. A review of the literature showed that most of the studies on the information-seeking behavior of academics had been undertaken in developed countries, and thus, reflect the information-seeking environment there. However, conditions in developing countries are considerably different, and they make it relatively tricky to apply data

from developed countries befittingly. Although a few isolated studies on the information-seeking behavior of academicians have been undertaken in developing countries, little headway has been made in understanding the complexity of information needs and the manner in which academics in developing countries seek and use information.

Developments in computers, microelectronics, and communication technologies have radically changed the library and information environment. Gone are the days of stand-alone libraries, in which a library was judged less by the quality of its resources and services than by the number of materials it had available. Traditional libraries were dominated by print publications and the access mechanisms were also by-and-large manual. The paradigm shift from stand-alone libraries to library and information networks, available via the Internet, can provide end-users with a connection to Internet-based services. Moreover, the present generation is surrounded by automated, digital, and virtual libraries as well as by networked data, specialized networks, and library networks. Multimedia and the Internet have further made the job of library and information professionals more challenging. The influence of new technology on Information Seeking is also providing a new set of alternative models that more accurately describe the Information Seeking process as a dynamic activity. Reading in the 21st Century is no longer confined to reading print books. Electronic versions of many print materials have been made available on the World Wide Web. Some of the advantages of using electronic or digital materials include their relative accessibility and flexibility in terms of time and space. Electronic materials also allow the inclusion of multi-media elements like sound and video clips, which cannot be presented in print books. These and other factors have contributed to growing acquisition rates of e-books and e-journals in academic libraries around the world.

# II. INFORMATION SEEKING AND RETRIEVAL:

Information seeking as a problem seems natural to augment with information retrieval ideas, but should be additionally leveraged with other users' information-seeking behavior. At worst, information seeking and information retrieval can be scaffolded over each other to gradually build to a refinement of a user's information need. Information seeking is a process in which humans purposefully engage in order to change their state of knowledge. From a behavioral perspective, the primary difference between Information retrieval and Information seeking is searching vs. browsing. The focus of each domain is on the actions studied. As computer technology matures, information retrieval and information-seeking studies are moving closer.

New technologies, such as the easy-to-use World Wide Web browser, will promote more information seeking, and use and attract new users every day and every hour. However, new interfaces alone will not help us to find everything we seek, but a user might believe so as users often think electronic information is more accurate or complete. In a way, utilizing more collaboration between users can make up for some of the shortcomings of technical systems. Blending the different perspectives and experience levels of a pool of users can result in a larger body of resources being discovered. Many authors are of the opinion that there are two styles of expert searchers, the operationalists who understand the system and use high-precision searches and the conceptualists who focus on concepts and terminology to then combine results to form more complete examinations. This combination of users cooperating can create a powerful team to enhance each other's Information Seeking.

Different search techniques are undertaken by library users to search and locate relevant information. To understand how users of libraries search and find relevant documents librarians must understand the search techniques and what resources and sources of information they generally use. There are many ways of looking at the information-seeking process. Of the

research viewed, each one had its own ideals and factors that shed new light on the activities conducted. Ford (1973) offers a conceptual model for researching information needs and uses on the basis of information communication. The model has six components — sources or originators, methods or activities, messages, channels or media, recipients, and information. It is presented as:

(SOURCE) (METHOD) (MESSAGES)

"The source / writes or speaks / ideas, research results, etc. /which are trans-

(CHANNEL) (RECIPIENT) (METHOD) mitted by / journal, meeting, etc, etc. /

to the recipient, who reads or hears / the message and is thus informed. At this point, the message is converted into INFORMATION ".

This view of information flow can aid in researching information seeking and retrieval practices by providing a basis to analyze interactions. The information-seeking tasks are initiation, an awareness of an information need; selection, the identification or selection of an approach or subject to explore; exploration, the investigation of information to gain understanding; formulation, where the person achieves a perspective or point of view on the problem; collection, the gathering of the relevant information; and presentation, to fulfill the information need and conclude the search. Through these stages of information seeking, the individual is subject to feelings of uncertainty, optimism, confusion, frustration, doubt, clarity, a sense of direction, confidence, and satisfaction or disappointment. Actions move from exploration to the documentation stage; thoughts move from being vague in the earlier stages to being focused as interest increases.

India, though one of the developing countries in the world in the sphere of education with its 66 percent literacy, has enormous specialist manpower in every possible area, and outstrips many developed countries in terms of scientists, technologists, software specialists, management experts, and so on.

Technical education in India contributes a significant share to the overall education system and plays a vital role in the social and economic development of our nation. In its very broadest sense, the discipline of engineering is concerned with that body of theory and practice that is relevant to the design and construction of real-world artifacts arising from human endeavor. Pre-university education is not only teaching basics, but also relies on training some personal and technical skills, modifying the student's way of thinking in a more logical way to achieve creativity at the end.

India has the potential to be a global skill leader. The Indian economy has been growing at the rate of 8 to 9% per year. The Indian industry has also become globally competitive in several sectors and can increase its global market share. A critical factor in this will be the success of the pre-university education system in India. With economic growth and the spread of technology, the demand for quality has increased manifold. This has been matched by an increase in enrolments in pre-university as well as a rise in the number of institutions in India.

# III. NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PRE-UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Education and the library have been inseparable for centuries and civilizations. Evidence is plenty where the library has been one integral part of all education, more so in the institutions

of intermediate (pre-university) learning. The libraries since their existence have also adapted to changes that have influenced them from outside as well as within. The moveable type brought the first landmark change in the content of libraries. Since that time the libraries started acquiring new media and also a new role in supporting academic programs of all educational Institutions. Libraries with changing media enhance the needs and want of the learners and the facilitators of learning -the teacher and the librarian. This implies, that the changes seen in education have a definite impact and brought transformation in every domain of libraries. The knowledge resources of libraries have changed from time to time, and the methods of handling have also undergone significant change, with the changing media and the users also adopting this process of continuous change. Needless to say that the new media in which knowledge resources are emerging are equally accepted by the users of today.

A pre-university college library of cans is classed as an academic library. The tender age of information services to students and teaching faculty is the backbone of the pre-university college library. Reference services in this library must go beyond the state of informal personal aid to provide advanced information to persons engaged in teaching and research. The modem library was definitely a creation of the twentieth century when the need was intensely felt for separate libraries catering to the specialized needs of individuals and groups. In recent years to ensure the use of indigenous skill development and in view of the country's economic viability, the government also realized the importance of pre-university libraries. The library in a progressive pre-university college must seek to fulfill the following functions:

(a) To provide a comprehensive selection of literature covering the requirement of the course syllabus, together with a selection from the humanities to help a student to broaden his reading beyond his particular course.

(b) To enable students to be trained in seeking, collecting, and applying the information for them.

(c) To provide for the teaching staff a substantial nucleus of the more advanced and specialized works, together with the periodicals necessary to enable them to keep abreast of the latest developments in their subjects.

(d) To provide reference service as well as information service for students and staff to assist them in their studies and research activities.

(e) To cater to the needs of any research that is being done in the college.

## IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the above sections, an attempt has been made to bring a relation between the pre-university college libraries and their utility. It is also essential to examine whether these libraries have the suitability, in terms of their structure and framework to adopt the contemporary changes and challenges. It is also necessary to investigate as how library users and professionals are prepared or getting prepared for these fast-changing events and information challenges. Hence, research under the topic entitled "***Assessing the Information Needs and Seeking Behavior of Women Faculty Members Working in PU Colleges of Kalaburagi District of Karnataka: A study***" has been undertaken to study the problems under the purview of academic libraries.

## V. NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Users constitute an inseparable and indispensable part of any library and information system. It is often remarked that a library is basically a service institution designed to provide

information services to fulfill the information requirements of the community. Human-being is involved in certain activities which are complex and interdependent. This phenomenon gives rise to an increasing need for information from some potential sources that are known to them. The information needs of library users are varied in nature. They differ qualitatively, quantitatively, and geographically. They also differ with regard to the intellectual level, frequency, and volume of information sources required. There are unlimited producers of information. Some of them are governmental organizations, others are non-governmental agencies, institutions, and industrial firms. All these agencies add to the phenomenal growth of volume and variety of information.

The growth of knowledge and increase in the number of documents published in various fields, growth in the number of users, would create a greater demand for information multidisciplinary in nature. The path-breaking developments in the field of multimedia have provided much-needed relief to overcome many problems in libraries. The information needs are also in a state of constant flux. To meet the ever-widening interests of the users, unfailing alertness is required on the part of the information intermediary, the librarian, or the information scientist. He has to be resilient so as to meet the challenges posed by the informed elasticity of the mind of the specialist user. Information needs remain an essential tool for a library to make itself fit for the right user.

A library being a service institution is designed to provide necessary information services to its users. In order to make the services useful and the process effective, it is essential to know the information needs of the users. Hence, for a library to be successful in achieving its very objective, must understand its users' information needs. To undertake the task of studying the information needs, it is the responsibility of the librarian to identify the factors that affect information needs so as to devise appropriate and more reliable methods of satisfying their needs. In the present situation where information technology prevails over the library

environment, it is critical on the part of the information professional to study information needs at regular intervals.

When a need is felt for anything, people take action in order to satisfy that need. They resort to different strategies or modes of action for their need fulfillment. The same applies to the satisfaction of information needs. In order to satisfy the need for information, individuals pursue different paths. Information-seeking behavior is mainly concerned with who needs what kind of information for what reason; how information is found, evaluated, and used. It is one of the essential areas in user studies. In the present-day academic world, users want precise information within a short period of time. The libraries on the other hand cannot cope with the information need of the users with their limited resources. The condition of the hour is to make the best use of the available resources and infrastructure facilities. Research on the study of information needs and information-gathering habits of a particular community will assist an information center in developing effective programs and using the resources in an optimum way. Thus, scientific studies of the information-seeking behavior of the users and user needs assume significance.

For any information system, the user is the central point. Unless information services effectively reach the user, the system intended to deliver the needed information is rendered ineffective. Any information system can become user-friendly only when it understands the information-seeking behavior of its users. Proper knowledge of users' information needs is one of the essential components for developing a proper information system. The review of the literature reveals that a number of studies have been conducted on the information-seeking behavior of users belonging to various subject groups and various levels such as faculty, research scholars, and students.

However, there is no systematic study reported on the information needs and information-seeking pattern by the women faculty serving in the pre-university colleges of India and Karnataka in particular. In the context of pre-university education, one can notice the prodigious growth of pre-university colleges in India, especially in the early nineties. Consequently, libraries attached to these institutions are growing year after year providing a variety of new services in response to the emerging information and communication technology. However, there is unequal growth in the development of these colleges due to certain factors, such as social, economic, political, and management policies. The emergence of enterprise culture, competition among the pre-university institutions, challenges of dynamic changes, and the mounting pressure for accountability to the ever-changing trends in education are some of the factors influencing the provision of library and information services. At this juncture, it is pertinent to make a systematic study of the information-seeking behavior of the women faculty in the pre-university educational institutions which not only provides a bird's eye view of the functioning of pre-university college libraries but also provide an insight into the information needs and information seeking behavior of the women faculty. All these factors have demanded a comprehensive study and investigation of the information needs and information-seeking behavior of the women faculty attached to the Government Pre-University colleges governed under the Department of Collegiate Education of Karnataka.

## VI. OBJECTIVES

The study has been conducted with the following objectives:

(i) To study the information-seeking behavior pattern of the women faculty members working in Government Pre-University Colleges of Kalaburagi district of Karnataka;

(ii) To analyze the most sought sources of information among women faculty members;

(iii) To examine the women faculty members' satisfaction with the comprehensiveness of respective institution's library collection;

(iv) To identify the various channels of information, the women faculty members make use of information seeking process;

(v) To analyze the extent of use and dependence on various sources of information for teaching and research in the internet era.

## VII. HYPOTHESIS

1. There exists no uniformity in the information-seeking behavior of the women faculty members in Government Pre-University Colleges in Kalaburagi district of Karnataka.

2. The designation and family income of the faculty does not influence information-seeking behavior.

3. The women faculty members in Government Pre-University Colleges are unsatisfied with library services and collection.

4. The women faculty members depend on more than one channel of information sources.

5. Formal and documentary sources dominate the informal and interpersonal sources in information-seeking behavior.

## VIII. METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a combined methodology of theory and fieldwork in order to examine the information-seeking behavior of the women faculty members working in Government Pre-

University Colleges of Karnataka. In this context, an exhaustive survey of the literature will be conducted.

The profuse use of published literature will be made for the study. Several databases available like ERIC, LISA, International Dissertations Abstracts, etc. will be searched to get the published documents. Based on the review of literature, a structured questionnaire will be designed to collect data from the target women faculty members working in Government Pre-University Colleges of Karnataka drawn from various parts of Karnataka State. A pilot study will be conducted with a sample of 50 respondents from Pre-University Colleges in the Kalaburagi District of Karnataka and the results will be tested. Based on the analysis, the questionnaire was further modified and developed to suit the stated objectives. Accordingly, a revised version of the questionnaire will be created. The revised questionnaire will be administered among women faculty members working in Government Pre-University Colleges of Karnataka constituting representative samples of each district. Repeated visits will be carried out to the selected libraries to make an on-the-spot observation. Also, a series of discussions will be held with the professionals, experts, and fellow researchers to get a clear picture of the concept and the related aspects. Therefore, this research work will be using multi-methods to collect, analyze and consolidate the data.

The data collected from the questionnaire will be analyzed to test the hypothesis framed and to fulfill the stated objectives. For this purpose, the SPSS software package will be used for the statistical analysis techniques such as frequency distribution, percentage analysis, Likert-scale, Chi-square Test, etc., depending on the data collected from the respondents.

# IX. LIMITATIONS

The scope of this study is limited to the women faculty members working in Government Pre-University Colleges of Karnataka state. Although there are many private colleges, but only government Pre-University Colleges will be considered for Study. This study is confined to the women faculty members working in the Pre-University College of Karnataka. A random sampling technique will be adopted to select the sample for the study considering the time and budget constraints.

# X. CHAPTERIZATION

The study is organized into six chapters. A brief account of each chapter is given below:

Chapter 1: Introduction, Need, Objectives, Hypotheses, Methodology, Limitation of the study;

Chapter 2: Review of Literature;

Chapter 3 Growth and Development of Government Pre-University Colleges of Kalaburagi District of Karnataka;

Chapter 4 Profiles of the Government Pre-University Colleges libraries of Kalaburagi District of Karnataka.

Chapter 5 Data collection, Analysis, and Interpretation.

Chapter 6 Findings, Suggestions, and Conclusion.

# XI. CONCLUSION

Libraries these days are involved in a wide range of media, and the librarian is compelled to be aware of the emerging media. In fact, the library of the recent past was not like the library of today, and obviously, the library of the future will be pretty different from what it is today. In the information society, Information has been considered as one of the critical factors of production. A library is the primary source of information. The purpose of this study is to study the information-seeking behavior pattern of the women faculty members working in the Pre-University College of Karnataka and to think seriously about information media and its optimum use for the promotion of pre-university education and learning.

Academic libraries are in transition due to changes in socio-economic, cultural, and technological fields. Recent trends have profoundly reshaped the library service landscape. As a dynamic institution, the pre-university library must continue to evolve with reference to the changing scenario. For the past three-four decades, the development of Information Technology has been responsible for changing every aspect of library services. Today library professionals must be proactive to new changes by maintaining flexibility, and creativity and making easy access to information to meet the increasing demands of the users at different levels. The age of Electronic libraries has arrived. The primary role of helping the users to find the needed information remains the same in the information age; also the importance of pre-university education and information literacy is widely recognized across the institutions of learning in the world.

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